

CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

Weekly Bulletin

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Entered as second-class matter February 21, 1922, at the post office at Sacramento, California, under the Act of August 24, 1912.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Section 1103, Act of October 3, 1917.

Vol. I, No. 41

NOVEMBER 25, 1922

GUY P. JONES
EDITOR

Pioneering in Public Health.

Dr. N. K. Foster of Oakland, who served as secretary of the State Board of Health for many years, retiring in 1909, gave some interesting reminiscences of state health work at the annual conference of California health officers, held in Palo Alto last September. Dr. Foster's remarks are published in full in this issue of the bulletin and it is believed that at this time they are worth the perusal of all individuals in the state who may be interested in public health activities. It was under Dr. Foster's administration that the modern foundation of the California State Board of Health was laid. It is he who inaugurated the establishment of the State Hygienic Laboratory, the Bureau of Foods and Drugs and many other important activities of the Board. It was during Dr. Foster's term that plague flared up in California. During the troublous times that followed, Dr. Foster maintained his calm judgment and his policies proved right. California owes a great deal to Dr. Foster. He may truly be called a pioneer in the promotion of California's public health.



A Bouquet From London.

In its issue of October 7th The Medical Officer, official journal for medical men in the government and municipal services of Great Britain, has the following to say of our Weekly Bulletin.

"Early this year the California State Board of Health commenced publication

of a weekly bulletin in order to distribute quickly and more extensively current information concerning the prevalence of communicable diseases, and in order to give public health workers closer co-operation in the control of outbreaks of these diseases. The Board also issues a quarterly bulletin which contains full statistical data and complete summaries and reports of the Board's wide variety of activities. The new weekly provides in very interesting form full information regarding the current prevalence of communicable diseases throughout the state and general public health news as well. In this way the Board hopes to keep in closer touch with public health workers throughout the state and we have no doubt, judging by the issues we have already seen, that the bulletin will be read with interest in health departments far beyond California."



IN RETROSPECT.*

By N. K. FOSTER, M.D., Oakland.

I have been asked to give an account, for record purposes, of the formation of the California Public Health Association.

Such an account to be of any historical value, must deal authentically with the conditions, events and incidents that led up to and made desirable and necessary the formation of such an association. If I were limited to one word in stating the

*Read at the Stanford University Session of the League of California Municipalities, September 19 to 23, 1922.

necessity, I should, without hesitation, say "Plague," for in many ways the breaking out of that disease focused attention on our lax health organization and made imperative a radical improvement, or have California cut off by quarantine from communication with other states.

Plague was first recognized in San Francisco in March, 1900, and of course caused a great deal of comment. Many strongly believed that it did not and could not exist. The State Board of Health, however, admitted its existence. Many leading newspapers and public men thought otherwise and believed that even if it did exist any publicity would hurt the state. They strenuously denied its existence and the State Board of Health was induced to, or did, reverse itself and also declared the disease was not plague. This aroused the ire of the eastern health officers, and exaggerated stories were published there of its ravages—people were dropping dead on the streets, it was said. They were so wrought up that the health authorities of twenty-one states requested Surgeon-General Walter Wyman to call a conference of the State Boards of Health with the United States Public Health and Marine Hospital Service, for the purpose of dealing with the situation. The conference was called and met in January, 1903. California was represented by Dr. Mathew Gardner, a member of our State Board of Health. He was given a very unhappy half-hour by the thoroughly angered and possibly frightened health officers—and a quarantine resolution against California was introduced. Through the influence of General Wyman, it was left as unfinished business for a conference to be called later.

Meanwhile, "things were doing" in California. During the years 1900-1-2-3 there had been 110 cases of plague, authenticated with 105 deaths, and some people were beginning to be alarmed.

At the general election, Dr. Geo. C. Pardee was elected Governor, and at once interested himself in the situation. The California State Board of Health was organized by the Governor nominating the members, and the Senate ratifying the nominations. Governor Gage had nominated the Board that denied the existence of plague, but the Senate had neglected to ratify—so they were acting only at the pleasure of the Governor. Governor Pardee, feeling deeply the gravity of the situation—with a quarantine hanging over us—withdrawed the nominations and appointed a new Board,

with the exception of Dr. Mathew Gardner. He, however, died in two weeks, and we were deprived of his splendid ability. This was in February or March, 1903. On April 1st, the new Board met with the old, and after the old had closed up their business, the new one organized and I had the honor to be elected secretary and executive officer.

After adjournment, I called on my predecessor, who had his desk in the office of the State Lunacy Commission, and asked for the property of the Board. With a quizzical look, he said: "Property of the Board? It has no property. That desk is mine and every scrap of paper in it." He did, however, give me a bunch of letterheads, and pointing to the bay window, said: "Those old reports of other State Boards are at your disposal." He sat between his desk and the steel safe, made famous by the sarcastic remarks of Carrie Nation, as she "hatched" her way through the state, and said: "Sit down, and I'll give you some advice." I was receptive, thinking to get some pointers on the work. Instead: "You have a good practice—stay with it, have some one open your mail and attend to it—come once a month and draw your pay and show yourself, and let me show you how to make out your expense account for the trip." He proceeded to put down items, some of which I had, some not—"Dinner, \$5.00," and everything in proportion. I said, "but, Doctor, it didn't cost that much." "Oh! that doesn't matter, you have \$1500 a year to spend on the expenses of the Board, and you have to get rid of it. You might as well have it as anybody." Not a bright outlook, and I went to my room in none too happy a mood. No desk, no chair, and no place to put them if I had them.

Next morning I interviewed Mr. Mellich, Secretary of the State Board of Examiners. He had large offices, but personally, he was using, during the interim of the legislative session, the Lieutenant Governor's room. He kindly let me have desk room there, also. The janitor rustled me a desk and chair, and I turned to that pile of old State reports. With them I found many unopened letters, and this gave me a start to work. Some were months old, and some had in them stamps to insure a reply. I didn't blame one doctor, who was acting as best he could as Health Officer in his village, for using some pretty powerful language. He said "this is the third time I have written, and have no reply, and by G— it is the last." I replied that a new deal was ordered, and that in future,

he would get some sort of reply by return mail.

Do you blame me for feeling "lonely and blue"? I had given up my practice and broken up my home, believing I was to fill, or try to fill, an office of honor—and I found nothing but disgrace abroad, and contempt at home, and right there the seed of this Association was planted.

The need of work, and organized work, was forced on me in those hours of discouragement. I saw the futility of my working without the aid and cooperation of others throughout the state. An account of the June 3d Plague Conference in Washington, where we fought it out—and instead of a quarantine, got a resolution of confidence—has no place here.

It was a busy spring and summer I spent, trying to arouse interest in public health matters. I attended all the medical societies I could, visited the different health officers, and answered all calls for help in person. I met with willingness everywhere but a good deal of incredulity that the State Board of Health was anything but a sinecure, and seemed to me they all came from Missouri and had to be shown. Very well, I determined to show them.

From the nature of things, the executive officer of the Board at that time, had most of the work to do. There were no assistants, not even a stenographer; but never was such officer backed up by a better Board. Throughout the six years we were together there was never a jar in the organization, and they always stood behind me. The Governor, also, was always ready to help to the limit. Things began to move, but the need of organization was always felt. There were no laws, and it was every one for himself. In July, I began writing to different health officers and doctors to ask their views of an association. The response was favorable, and we called the first meeting for September 8, 1903, at San Francisco. The attendance was good, and the name: "State, County and Municipal Sanitary Conference of California," was chosen. The next meeting was held in Paso Robles, April 18, 1904. I have no record of the program, but quote the following from a report to the Governor: "The objects of the conference are to discuss questions relating to public health, to exchange ideas in regard thereto, and to establish through the state a concord of action so that there can be some uniformity in the work. In other words, to bring organization out of chaos." At both meet-

ings excellent papers were read and discussed, and there was awakened a general interest which is already bearing fruit.

I have no record of the third and fourth meetings. They were all kept and left in the health office at Sacramento, when I left the office, in July, 1909.

With the beginning of the publication of the Monthly Bulletin by the State Board of Health in June, 1905, the program and accounts of meetings were duly published, and is therefore a matter of record.

When the name was changed to the "California Public Health Association," I can not say, but it must have been at the third or fourth meeting, for the fifth was called under that name.

The merging of the association with the League of Municipalities is modern history, and as my field is ancient, it is outside my province. In our need for help and desire to get organization, we formed health officers' associations in central, northern and southern California, and had several very interesting sessions. Of their fate I know nothing, but probably, as this association increased in strength, it absorbed the others; and I mention them only to show the need I felt for such help. The need was urgent and I received a full measure of support and help, and shall always hold this association in grateful remembrance. If my efforts accomplished anything in the health work of the state, it was because of the loyal aid and support I received from the association and its members—a help I am only too glad of this opportunity to acknowledge. The friendships I made have been among the pleasantest of my life, and I look back on the first days of my official life as perhaps a necessary trial to lead up to better things.



In no field of effort is there so much promise and opportunity as in conserving the public health.—Secretary of State, Charles Evan Hughes.



We must throw around the home and life of our people an enlightened world's knowledge of preventive medicine, and make ceaseless war upon sickness, suffering and death in this state. Our great department of health must be generously nourished and equipped for this humane service. Disease can not be successfully prevented by individual effort alone. Modern statesmanship demands that every practical effort shall be made through organized health boards and expert officers to protect the health of the people.—Governor Morrison of North Carolina.

MORBIDITY.***Smallpox.**

Nine cases of smallpox were reported from the following localities: Hanford 1, Los Angeles County 1, Oakland 2, Sacramento 1, San Jose 1, Shasta County 3.

Typhoid.

Only twelve cases of typhoid were reported, the distribution being as follows: Dinuba 1, Fresno County 1, Oakland 1, Placer County 1, Redding 1, San Bernardino 1, San Francisco 2, San Joaquin County 1, Shasta County 3.

Cerebrospinal Meningitis.

Oakland and Orange County each reported one case of cerebrospinal meningitis.

*From reports received to date for last week.

"Sickness causes loss of time, great expense, much suffering, and, frequently, death. When the misery and distress produced by it are taken into account, the importance of its prevention can not be over-estimated. It may often be easily avoided by simple means. Scurvy, which was once the scourge of the seas, now rarely occurs on vessels. This is due to the addition of fresh fruits, vegetables, or lime juice to the seaman's ration. Necrosis of the jaw, or phossy jaw, which was formerly so common among workmen in match factories, is now prevented by the use of red phosphorus instead of white phosphorus in this industry. Yellow fever has been stamped out of many places by killing the mosquitoes which convey the disease.

"To protect ourselves against disease, it is necessary to know what agencies are harmful to the human body and what measures should be taken to protect the body from them. It has been ascertained, for instance, that in order to keep well, the temperature and humidity of the air in buildings must be regulated; sewage must be disposed of in such a manner as not to contaminate the water supply or pollute the soil; the body must be protected from the bites of insects which spread disease; and precautions must be taken to prevent the transmission of disease from one person to another. It will thus be readily seen that freedom from disease depends upon conditions intimately associated with the body and its environment."—United States Public Health Service.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE REPORTS.

Diseases	1922				1921			
	Week ending			Reports for week ending Nov. 18 received by Nov. 21	Week ending			Reports for week ending Nov. 19 received by Nov. 23
	Oct. 28	Nov. 4	Nov. 11		Oct. 29	Nov. 5	Nov. 12	
Anthrax.....	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Cerebrospinal Meningitis.....	1	1	3	2	3	3	4	3
Chickenpox.....	50	67	76	76	41	77	57	111
Diphtheria.....	227	250	234	176	337	398	447	340
Dysentery (Bacillary).....	2	3	2	0	4	1	7	2
Epidemic Encephalitis.....	3	1	0	0	8	3	3	1
Gonorrhoea.....	125	229	92	63	97	95	107	155
Influenza.....	16	31	32	19	14	10	13	16
Leprosy.....	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Malaria.....	3	8	7	3	2	7	10	8
Measles.....	17	10	20	13	23	14	18	14
Mumps.....	24	21	20	13	76	69	85	77
Pneumonia.....	56	84	76	61	34	58	48	84
Poliomyelitis.....	0	2	0	0	26	12	13	4
Scarlet Fever.....	155	164	191	133	107	165	167	168
Smallpox.....	8	11	13	9	79	54	42	61
Syphilis.....	92	211	85	58	63	90	109	52
Tuberculosis.....	144	146	104	71	104	146	109	120
Typhoid Fever.....	33	17	24	12	31	16	18	11
Whooping Cough.....	36	37	69	49	57	44	20	29
Totals.....	992	1,293	1,048	758	1,107	1,262	1,277	1,256

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